The General Election of 1922.

THREE STRENUOUS WEEKS

AND OTHER EPISODES

BY

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(Member for the Chislehurst Division of the County of Kent).

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FOREWORD.

The somewhat exceptional circumstances in which I find myself the Member of Parliament for the Chislehurst Division of Kent, and the wish of those who will read it to learn how I came to embark upon the enterprise, and having embarked upon it to carry it through, have persuaded me, not without considerable hesitation, to print the pages that follow. They are intended only for the perusal of members of my family and of a very few close personal friends.

12*th February*, 1923.

THREE STRENUOUS WEEKS.

It was on the evening of Monday the 23rd October 1922, while I was sitting in my office trying to settle a complicated Memorandum, that I received an enquiry on the telephone asking me if I would be willing to stand as the Conservative Candidate for the Chislehurst Division of Kent. The enquiry was wholly unexpected and I did not encourage the suggestion. The next day, however, I met the leaders of the Party and learnt the cause of the invitation, and after some discussion agreed to stand, and on the following evening, Wednesday the 25th October, I was officially adopted as the Candidate at a Meeting of the Conservative Association held at Sidcup. I made no formal speech on that occasion, but I listened to many descriptions of my qualifications, full of eulogy and couched in language only fit for the tomb of some great man buried in Westminster Abbey. I warned the audience not to be misled by these descriptions, and promised to do my best, and that is the only substantial promise I have made from start to finish. I then

got a map and looked at the Division, which I found was far larger than I expected, extending as it does from Mottingham on the west to within a mile of Dartford and two miles of Gravesend on the east. Then south to Ridley and east to Chelsfield, Knockholt, Hayes, Keston and West Wickham. It includes the towns of Chislehurst, Orpington, Sidcup, Farningham, Eynsford, Swanley Junction, Farnborough and Darenth and many villages.

The Electorate I learnt numbered over 28,000, of whom about 12,000 were women most of them voting for the first time. My Agent, Mr. Attwood, outlined to me that evening what was expected of me and said over thirty meetings had been arranged and as I saw that there were only eighteen working days till the Polling Day, I remonstrated with him, but he maintained that none could be safely omitted, and I embarked on the enterprise. There was no time to consult with my friends, and I had to do the best I could in the time.

Immediately the announcement appeared in the Press I received a large number of letters wishing me success. The letters

from some of my best friends who knew my circumstances, shewed clearly an apprehension that I should find with my existing obligations the strain of the House of Commons too great for me. One letter, while cordially wishing me success was indeed like the considered judgment of the Full Court of Appeal in its friendly but anxious summary of the arguments against the enterprise. However, by the time it was received I had pledged myself beyond recall.

I found it a strange sensation, the strenuous life of those eighteen days full of so many entirely new experiences. The sensation of ceasing to be a peaceful private citizen and finding myself at a moment a semi-public man was a curious one—but I got accustomed to seeing large posters with my name in very big letters pasted on other people's houses and to seeing my photograph in the newspapers and paragraphs about my doings. It is a great experience to fight a contested election and one that I would not now be without. I had not made a political speech for over ten years and was but little accustomed to large audiences. My experience at this

Election was a fortunate one; nearly all my audiences were easy audiences, and those that were not at least gave me a hearing and never failed to respond to an appeal for fair play. The Election too was fought without personal bitterness and though hard blows were exchanged on both sides, no animosity remained, so far as I could see, on either side when all was over.

The first business was to write an Election Address and that I did not find at all easy, but with my brother's help we framed the address which I think satisfied the leaders of the Party, and it is printed in this little booklet. I had to acquaint myself with many subjects about which I had of course some general knowledge and some idea as to my views; but it became necessary to study the subjects and read the arguments on either side, it became needful to get to the root as far as possible of the Official Labour Party's programme, to read the speeches as reported from day to day of the leaders of the various Parties in the State and it became necessary to make up one's mind quite definitely on many matters about which one had hitherto been in doubt. All this required a con-

siderable mental effort, and while I was doing it I had to attend to my profession, for this episode had come into my life at a particularly busy time of the year, when I was inundated with professional work which could not in the interests of those concerned be entirely laid aside. The mornings were occupied in this way, the afternoons with business connected with the contest, and frequently with an afternoon meeting, and the evenings were devoted to speeches, generally two a night and sometimes three, and I often finished up many miles from home. I received many offers of hospitality for the night, but I preferred, however late it might be, to sleep in my own bed, and this I succeeded in doing every night throughout the Election. I was afraid of my voice near the end but it held. Three nights we had fog and anyone who knows what driving a car in foggy lanes is, will realise the anxiety which that caused me, but my chauffeur was invaluable, and we never failed to turn up at any meeting, though on one occasion I was an hour late having taken that time to crawl the four miles from the last village. The meeting had been

singing patriotic songs and gave me such a welcome that I was more than repaid for the effort in getting there. Many houses offered me dinner, but except on rare occasions I could not accept and dined in the car off sandwiches between the meetings.

I have been asked about my speeches and how I prepared them. Well, I took great pains over the first speech and then I threw preparation and notes away and trusted to my knowledge of the subject and to the moment to find the words: It required courage at first, but audiences were so different that a prepared speech would have on many occasions been entirely unsuited to the particular audience I was addressing. After the first meeting I never had a note of any kind in my hand, and I am satisfied that as far as effect goes, a speaker who can trust himself and his audience, does much better if he watches his audience and suits his speech to the occasion, though as an oration it may fall far below a prepared effort. Afternoon audiences are notoriously heavy and generally slow to take the points and as a rule deficient in applause which is

often so very helpful—working-men audiences are the quickest to see the points and follow the arguments—but at a time like an election contest the evening audiences were all on the alert and were composed of men and women of every social standing. Then I have been asked about questions. Well, a Candidate must expect to be questioned: interruptions and questions lend zest to any meeting. At a small meeting my practice was to ask for questions and answer them as they were put; at large meetings my Chairman usually asked that they should be written down, and then I read the questions out to the audience one by one myself and answered them consecutively.

Two meetings remain particularly in my memory—the first was a large meeting of ladies at Chislehurst who gave me notice that they didn't want me to make a speech, but only to come and answer questions; that invitation I confess caused me some alarm, but I spent an invigorating three-quarters of an hour with my lady friends, answering to some of the questions "I don't know," at which they did not seem either surprised or displeased. The

other meeting was of the Fruit Growers Association, a body of men with grounds for complaint and most reasonable in their method of enumerating them. They acceded to my proposal that as I was not an expert they should do the talking and I should do the listening, and I spent a very pleasant hour on the platform, and ended by being the asker of the questions instead of the answerer as had been invariably the case at other meetings.

Then came the Polling Day, and I drove all round the Division visiting every polling station except one; we started at 7.15 a.m. and ended up at 8 p.m.; the only polling station I couldn't visit was shrouded in fog and they didn't expect me. The counting of the votes in a big County Electoral Division takes time, and it was not begun till 10 o'clock the next morning, and the result was not declared till nearly 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Then began a stream of telegrams and letters, over 700—all from my many kind friends who had followed the contest with so much interest.

It had been a strenuous time. I had made forty-three speeches in the eighteen

days since adoption. I had travelled 1,150 miles and I had answered 214 questions, and the electors returned me by a majority of 5,545. I have by request printed my Election Address and three of my speeches, and I am indebted to the "Sidcup Times" for their reports of them and to the records preserved by others who heard them.

The Appendices contain other matter in which those who read these pages will be interested. I was asked during the contest more than once what matters in my life had given me the greatest interest and pleasure, and as this book is only to be read by those who know me best, I am content at their kind desire to share my interests and pleasures with them.

I exclude my many clients whose confidence and friendship have given me on so many occasions intense pleasure. I cannot mention their names, even those whose names are public property.

I feel that the youthful satisfaction, enjoyed now for over thirty years, of holding the 100 miles world's record on the road on a high bicycle, still remains with me, and then my journey round the world

with my wife—1902-3—is a continuous source of enjoyment. It is perpetually keeping me in touch with men and affairs outside this country. During and since the War the work on Government and Professional Committees engaged a great deal of my attention, and in every case I have added to my knowledge of problems that affected the lives and arrangements of many people and many things.

No one could have served on a Military Exemption Committee during the War without learning much of human nature and realising how readily the large majority of men applying for exemption at once accepted an adverse decision when they felt their cases had been fully considered.

The intricacies of Supreme Court Fees were not without interest, but it took a year to investigate the subject and frame the new figures. I doubt if the Lord Chancellor could have appointed four men with more different qualifications than those who composed the Fee Committee and ultimately reached unanimity. The approval of the work by the profession and the further endorsement of its value

later on by the Geddes Committee were gratifying to us all.

The Special Grants Committee of which I became Chairman, spent three millions on training 20,000 Ex-Officers for the professions and higher callings and has sat over four years. At first it was a struggle against the parsimony and suspicion of the Treasury, but in the end they fully realised we were not spendthrifts, and their representatives who attended the Committee could, in the discussion of the later cases, hardly be distinguished in their views from the rest of us: it has been a great piece of Reconstruction work. Sir Robert Horne originated the Scheme directly after the Armistice, and it owed much in the early days to Brig.-General Asquith, D.S.O.

What I have done on these various Committees, being called in question during the contest, I had to give particulars, and I print the letters from the Minister of Labour and the Lord Chancellor's Permanent Secretary, which I shewed for information, but not for publication, to some of the responsible men in the Division.

Amongst actual results achieved I am

almost inclined to put first the work done in connection with Church Finance. I can never forget an interview which I had with the two Archbishops in the Library at Lambeth early in 1914 lasting two hours, when a decision was taken which laid the foundation on which so much has since been built; but the time is not yet, nor is this the occasion, to describe that episode and what followed from it; nor shall I do more than mention the ten years during which I have been Vice-Chairman of the Finance Board of the Diocese of Rochester. The work done while I was Honorary Secretary of the Diocesan Conference in connection with the reorganisation of the finances of the Diocese of London was absorbingly interesting and became more so when the Archbishop of York, from knowledge gained as Bishop of Stepney, told me that the problem was almost insoluble. The awkward phases of the problem were helped by discussions with the Bishop of London during the days when we played golf together at North Berwick, St. Andrews and The Wildernesse, and if I may say so, respectfully, his fresh and receptive mind never failed

to offer suggestions that contributed to the solution which so many of us were struggling to find, while at the same time keeping the central idea of unification before him. I acknowledge it was a difficult task to bring under one roof and into one organisation the many different organisations in that Diocese, with their separate staffs and offices all hitherto appealing separately for funds. I print the tribute which was so generously and unexpectedly handed to me when the task was completed.

Perhaps the professional matter which gave me most mental satisfaction, was an arbitration at which, at the request of two very eminent firms in my profession, I sat as sole arbitrator—not because they thought me much of a lawyer or an expert, but because they said I was an honest and fair-minded man! The case involved a claim of £38,000, and should, as I soon felt when the hearing began, have been heard by a High Court Judge and Jury. Counsel for the Plaintiff was Mr. Douglas Hogg, K.C., now Sir Douglas Hogg, K.C., M.P., Attorney-General, and for the Defendant Sir John Simon, K.C., M.P.,

and the case lasted several days, during which neither advocate left the arbitrator for a moment. It was an interesting experience to be conscious of the efforts which each in turn made all through to capture such intelligence as I possessed. The case was hostile to the end, and the only single point on which the respective Counsel could agree was that the arbitrator be asked to state the reasons for his Award. I acceded to this request, and, while I was satisfied with the result, I was by no means content with the statement of the reasons, and looked forward to hearing the Judgment of the Divisional Court. However, the Award brought a settlement, the comment on both sides being that the Award was a good one but wrong—which was the highest praise I could fairly expect.

To the Council of the Law Society I owe many abiding friendships, and much experience, invaluable to me in every sphere of activity. It is a wonderful Governing Body, always ready to listen to anyone who really knows what he is talking about. The time and attention which it gives to the affairs of the Profession is not always fully appreciated by those who do not closely

follow its proceedings. On another side I value above most things membership of the City Law Club, and of the Lowtonian Society, both very ancient legal Societies limited in each case to thirty members and to membership of which election has to be unanimous. An invitation to join " Nobody's Friends " came to me a couple of years ago, but outside its charmed circle I must say no more than to record the honour which I feel it to be to find myself a member. And now I look forward to representing to the best of my power a great Constituency in the House of Commons, and to entering into the life of that greatest of assemblies, and to understanding its traditions, its records and its procedure.

Of necessity an account such as is above written is egotistical; it cannot be otherwise, and I still feel natural doubts as to the propriety of putting on paper so much that is personal. I have learnt, however, from this Election the deep interest which is taken, not only by the members of one's immediate family, but by distant relatives all over the world, in one's doings, and I have therefore set aside those doubts.

The letters that are printed in the Appendix, are most of them couched in over eulogistic language. I value them because the writers are all men of complete independence, but I desire to record the fact, that I have not become a person whose composition is solely a mixture of credulity and vanity.

I cannot mention the names of all those to whom I have been recently so indebted, but I must at least acknowledge the services rendered to me by Sir Alfred Smithers, the late Member; by my Election Agent, Mr. Attwood; by my Secretary, Miss Bowles; by my brother, Mr. A. C. Nesbitt, of the Chancery Bar, who with fraternal affection was always endeavouring to keep me straight; my thanks are due also to Sir Francis Towle, C.B.E.; to Mrs. Hudson Lyall, C.B.E.; and to Sir Henry Lennard, Bt., Mr. Travers Hawes and Sir John L. Dewrance, respectively the President, Chairman and Treasurer of the Conservative Association in the Division.

APPENDICES.

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APPENDIX No. 1.

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CHISLEHURST DIVISION OF KENT.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have had the honour of an invitation to stand for your Division as a Conservative and supporter of Mr. Bonar Law, and in that capacity I beg to appeal for your votes. I have been a Conservative all my life and I have no liking for Coalition, nor, in my opinion, is a Coalition, except in the gravest emergency, suitable to the temper of our people. I therefore welcome a return to Party Government upon the old lines under the safeguard of a healthy and virile Opposition.

I wish I had the time to make myself better known to the large Electorate whose confidence I ask for. I am a Kentish Man, and have worked for a good many years with many of the Kent Conservative Members, who are good enough to say they will welcome me in the House of Commons as a colleague if you do me the honour to elect me.

I am told I should say something about myself, though that, to my mind, is much less important than the principles and the policy for which I stand. I have for many years been a Member of the Council of the Law Society—the Governing Body of my Profession. I am Chairman in Great Britain of one of the leading Insurance

Companies of Australia, and am a Director of one of the largest Australian Banks, and I permit myself to add that I have received the thanks both of the Lord Chancellor and the Minister of Labour for work which I have voluntarily done at their invitation on Government Committees concerned with the administration of justice and the training of ex-Officers respectively. I have travelled through Canada and Australia and our Possessions in the Far East.

But this is more than enough about myself, and I turn to what I consider are at the present time

Pressing Needs.

In my judgment the most pressing need of the moment is a Stable Government, which can be relied on, not for brilliant experiments, either foreign or domestic, but for a single-hearted effort to bring about: Firstly, real Peace Conditions in Europe; secondly, the Reduction of the present ruinous Taxation, which presses on all classes of the Community; and thirdly, the Revival of that Trade and Industry by which alone our Country lives.

In my opinion these are the three paramount objects to which a Candidate for your suffrages should devote himself, and to these I pledge myself should you do me the honour to elect me.

A Close Alliance with France.

I am profoundly convinced that not only the honour but the material interests of this Country

require a Close Alliance with France and a Sympathy with her Policy, and I deplore the signs of disagreement which have lately manifested themselves. I think that only by the maintenance of such a concord can effective pressure be brought to bear on Germany for the discharge of her obligations and the Peace of Europe be assured. I am against misplaced leniency to Germany, and I do not accept the view that Germany can pay nothing.

Ireland.

With respect to Ireland, I am compelled to admit that the recent Treaty must be carried into effect, but I shall use any power and influence I possess towards abating the injustice and misery under which the Loyalists in the South and West are now labouring, as well as towards securing real Freedom of Choice for the Province of Ulster.

Reduction of Taxation.

I believe much can be done in the reduction of Taxation, and although I will not be a party to the curtailment of our vital Services, or any revision of our Pensions, I think many of the costly and superfluous Departments instituted by the late Government can be safely and wisely cut down.

Unemployment.

The immediate problem of Unemployment this winter will call for Emergency Measures. The true cure for Unemployment, however is, and can only be, by a Revival of our trade and industry—everything else is only temporary and palliative.

Our Colonial Empire.

I am in favour of closer Trade Relations with the various parts of our Empire beyond the Seas, and I advocate an early Conference upon this subject.

The Labour Party.

I shall certainly oppose almost every part of the programme put before the country on behalf of the Official Labour Party, although I welcome the presence of genuine representatives of Labour in Parliament. I should support any proposals under which the political, as distinct from the industrial and economic activities of Trade Unions, could be circumscribed.

Agriculture.

This country is, in my opinion, under a heavy obligation to its farmers, and, let me add, to its farm labourers and all concerned in the production of our food supplies. I shall, therefore, support every effort that can be devised to aid this most vital industry and to improve the conditions and prospects of that large class who,

whether as masters or men, depend upon farming for their livelihood and happiness.

These, Ladies and Gentlemen, are the principles by which I stand, and which, if you do me the honour of electing me, I promise to devote myself so far as in me lies.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Chancellor Nesbitt.

Hildenborough,

Kent.

2nd November, 1922.

Appendix No. 2.

SPEECH AT SIDCUP ON FRIDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 1922.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I now have the honour to make my first Public Speech in this Division as the Conservative Candidate adopted on Wednesday evening.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Coalition Government is dead, and I do not believe many people are very sorry—it had outstayed its welcome, and the Country is tired of its policy of improvisation and of expediency, and now there is to be a General Election and I shall ask you to vote for me, and to vote in favour of the cause which I represent when the day of Polling arrives.

I am at a disadvantage in not being, at all events politically, known to you, and in having such a short time at my disposal in which to visit all parts of this great and historic Division.

Before I say anything more, I should like you to understand that I fully realise that I am being asked to succeed a distinguished man who has served the Division with untiring diligence, and whose withdrawal from Public affairs in the House of Commons is a loss not only to this Division, but to Kent, and I make bold to say, to the conduct of the affairs of the British Empire generally.

The circumstances which have led Sir Alfred Smithers to withdraw at so late an hour must evoke our very sincere sympathy, and I shall

charge myself to convey to him your sense of appreciation and sympathy and your hope that he may have very many years of health and happiness before him outside the strenuous life which, in these days, falls upon a Member of Parliament.

I have received nothing but kindness from Sir Alfred and his family. I know that my views are his views, and I look forward to the knowledge that I shall have the prestige of his name and all the help he can give me in the contest in which I am about to embark.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am glad that my first meeting should have been in Sidcup, I am also glad that it should have been a Meeting originally summoned by the Women's Association, because no one realises better than I do the part which women are going to play, not only in this Division, but all over the Country.

There are here in this Division 12,000 Women Voters, and upon the kind of Government which this Country has in the future depends, in my judgment, very largely their happiness and the happiness of their homes, which again depends upon the prosperity of the Country and the way in which it is governed.

I should like to make the acquaintance of every one of these 12,000 Women Voters, and I should like to answer all the questions they wish to put to me, but that, Ladies and Gentlemen, even to a man of my reputed energy, being, you will realise, an impossible task, I must limit myself to endeavouring to make the acquaintance of as

many of the Electors as it is possible in the time at my disposal, by visiting as many parts of the Division as I can.

You have heard all about me, but please don't believe more than a fraction of what you have heard as you will be grievously disappointed; and now you see me.

I belong to Kent. I live within a few miles of the border of this constituency. I am proud that the portrait of my great grandfather should still be on the walls of the Hospital at Maidstone, placed there as a token of appreciation for his services to the community. I am known to many people, and I have received many letters of congratulation since the news of my adoption has become known. I shall read but one of them.

October 26th, 1922.

My dear Nesbitt,

I hear that you have been adopted as the Conservative Candidate for the Chislehurst Division.

I sincerely hope you may be returned as the Member. For many years your support and persuasive arguments have been of the greatest assistance to me in the Tonbridge Division, and I should gladly welcome you as a Kent man, for a Kent seat, if we are both successful!

All good wishes.

Yours very sincerely,

H. Spender Clay.

It is from Colonel Spender Clay, the trusted Member for the Tonbridge Division of Kent. He

speaks in far too kind terms of me, and I have the privilege of being known to the other Kent Members, all of whom have said they will welcome me as a colleague in the House of Commons, but after all it is not so much the man, the personal candidate, that I ask you to vote for, as it is the policy of His Majesty's Government which I propose to put before you this evening.

It is a policy which I believe will command the assent of all thinking, wise and moderate people who live in the Country and realise the state in which this Country now stands.

I stand before you as a Conservative, I have always been a Conservative, I am a Conservative to-day. I am a staunch supporter of Mr. Bonar Law, and I think the suggestion which we have all heard made by interested parties that no alternative Government was possible, has been answered by the names of the distinguished men who have already, so many of them, served the Country, who have joined his Government and who support his Policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have already written my Election Address, and it should be in your hands, and in the hands of the 28,000 Voters in this Division at the earliest possible moment. But while I am a strong supporter of Mr. Bonar Law, it would, I think, ill befit any Conservative Candidate, not to acknowledge publicly what our Country owes to Mr. Lloyd George the late Prime Minister. His dominant personality, his driving force, his dynamic zeal, have left their mark on the pages of our history, but the very

qualities which he possesses and which were so invaluable during the War, are the qualities which in these days have made us a little apprehensive sometimes, as to whether they are not too reminiscent of the qualities which he displayed from 1906 to 1914 to make us feel quite confident that what he recommends is in the interests of the Country.

In Mr. Bonar Law we have a wise leader.

We thought that we had Peace, we know now that really we have no Peace.

What we want is a time for quietly putting our house in order, and a time in which no heroic legislation shall be attempted. I think, indeed, we want a time when there should be as little legislation and as little administrative control by the Government over the lives and affairs of this Country as possible.

I think we want to give time for matters to right themselves. We want to put our financial house in order. We must not merely talk about economy and retrenchment, but we must see that it is practised.

I stand as a Conservative, in the language of Burke, as a man with a tendency to preserve and an inclination to improve. I am going to tell you what more I stand for. I stand, in the words of Lord Curzon, for stability and not sensation. I stand, in the words of Mr. McKenna, for real Peace and strict economy, and for the re-establishment of commercial confidence.

You have all no doubt read the great speech which Mr. Bonar Law made in Glasgow last night; I agree with every word of it, and now let me mention more in particular some of the matters on which you will see my views indicated in my Election Address, and which I had formed before I read Mr. Bonar Law's speech, and which I am proud to find now coincide with those of my leader.

I think the days in which we could live, or most of us live, within Great Britain without reference to any other parts of the World have gone by. I think the War has shattered that idea. It is plain to me that we cannot live alone. It is plain to me that we have to take our part in settling the affairs of Europe; our trade and commerce is too dependent and too International for us to think that we can do otherwise than take a leading part in the re-settlement of Europe, and to take a leading part we must restore, renew and strengthen our alliance with the great countries, side by side with whom we fought the War and gained the Victory, I mean France, and to no little extent, Italy. We must see fair play between the Greeks and the Turks.

We must not move, if it can possibly be avoided, except with the co-operation of the Allies whom I have mentioned.

I am against the proceedings which involve Prime Ministers hurrying from London to Paris, and from Paris to London, unless in very exceptional circumstances.

I think recent events have shown the wisdom of Lord Curzon; they show the wisdom of the well-tried methods of diplomacy carried on by accredited ambassadors. Many regrettable episodes would have been avoided, and many difficulties which Lord Curzon has had to repair, would not have occurred if more regular methods had been followed. A few days ago we were on the eve of War with Turkey, and it is to the skill of Lord Curzon in Paris, and to the tact and courage of General Harington on the shores of the Dardanelles, that it has been avoided.

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I stand first for a strong alliance with France and Italy. There may have been mistakes on both sides, but the welcome which France has given to the new Government leads me to feel that we should look for hopefulness for the future rather than dwell on the errors of one side or the other in the past.

I am not going to make a speech on the question of our Foreign Policy this evening beyond emphasizing that a sound Foreign Policy is essential to the well being of this Country.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what is the general position of this Country, because after all the financial and economic condition of this Country must be understood by the people who live in it, must be understood by the people who govern it, must be understood by the people whose duty it is to return to the House of Commons those who help to shape the Policy.

You know I have the honour to be a Director of a great Bank, the Chairman of an Insurance

Company, as well as being a lawyer who has for many years sat on the Governing Body of his Profession, and with the business training I have received, I feel I must on so serious an occasion as this, even at the risk of wearying you, give you some figures which I hope you will take home and think about; they shall not be many. The financial problem is so great and so all pervading that everything else has to be discussed in relation to it. Trade, employment, social betterment, education and Foreign Policy, are all dominated by the financial position of the World as a whole, as well as by that of our own Country. The pressure of taxation on every citizen is so severe that every effort must be made to reduce it.

Now I am going to tell you that the Budget before the War in 1914 was £209,000,000, and we spent about that sum.

We spent £28,000,000 on the Army, £51,000,000 on the Navy, and £61,000,000 on the Civil Service of which £12,000,000 went to old age pensions. What are we spending to-day? The total expenditure for this year, instead of £209,000,000 is £948,000,000 of which instead of £61,000,000 being for the Civil Service £346,000,000 is required. There are two items in that list for the Civil Service which no one would suggest for a moment interfering with. One is Old Age Pensions which take £22,000,000, and the other, for the security of which I and every right thinking Englishman would pledge himself, is £89,000,000 for the Ministry of Pensions. Subject

to those two items a great deal could be done as recommended by the Geddes Commission to reduce this enormous burden which confronts us. Let me repeat it—before the War we spent £209,000,000—after the War and to-day we are spending £948,000,000.

I hope that I have not wearied you with figures, but you will see that we are spending, necessarily to a great extent, an enormous sum compared with what we spent before the War. We are not doing so much trade as we were doing before the War, many of our best customers in Europe are unable to buy from us, and we have to provide £948,000,000 instead of £209,000,000, and now, what is the debt position? Before the War, I daresay I am telling you what you all know, but it is necessary to have the figures frequently in mind—before the War, our National Debt was about £700,000,000, now it is more than £7,000,000,000 and of course the interest has to be paid on that debt. We owe £1,280,000,000 abroad, largely to America, and we are owed by our Allies and former enemies and Colonies £2,000,000,000, the greater part of which we shall never see back.

As a business man the mere statement of those figures, without going more into details, shows you the enormous financial burden under which the Country is now labouring. We shall pay our debt to America, both principal and interest. We are too honest, and shall I say too proud, to suggest any other alternative.

The whole burden merely requires to be stated

to show the serious position in which this Country is, and the burden of taxation which has to be raised in order to meet it. That is the problem which will confront the new Government. No interference certainly with Old Age Pensions. No thought of interference with the pensions of those who fought for us. The payment of our debt to America, the payment of the interest on our debt to those who hold our obligations, and subject to these absolutely necessary payments, and to the upkeep of the Fighting Forces, the administration of Justice, the provision of Education, we shall endeavour, if it is at all humanly possible, indeed it must be done, to reduce the burden which now rests upon this Country. I hope I have not wearied you, but if you can retain just the main figures in your minds, you can see the problem in outline with which we have to deal. It can only be relieved by an increase in production. Private enterprise is the very essence of industrial prosperity, and I stand for a sane progressive and industrial Policy, but of course, there are alternatives. I turn to that suggested by the Labour Party whose Manifesto I have recently been considering.

I see that they recommend the revision of the Peace Treaty and Nationalization of Railways and Mines, a special Capital Levy, Increase on Death Duties and the Taxation of Land Values, all of which I disagree with.

I am not opposed to Labour, I am prepared to believe many of the leaders of the Labour

Party really think that the remedies which they propose are for the advantage of the great majority of this Country.

I am a believer in Trade Unions, I think they have done a great deal for the Working Classes of this Country, but with regard to the policy advocated by the Official Labour Party, I am opposed to it and shall do my utmost to resist it.

Let me summarise. I stand for a policy of tranquillity and stability, to give free scope to initiative and enterprise, for frank and full co-operation with France and our other Allies, for the loyal fulfilment of the obligations undertaken with Foreign Powers, but without any extensions of commitments, and if possible, for some curtailment of them.

And now I come to another matter about which I feel strongly, namely—I stand for close and continuous relations with the Governments of the Dominions and India. I am very glad to note that the Prime Minister proposes to summon the Dominions to an Economic Conference. Matters have changed very much in the last ten years. The young Nations I cannot say have become old ones, but they are now fully grown up and they are entitled to be consulted about the Policy of the Empire of which they form so important a part, and whose interests they have defended and may again be called upon to defend, and particularly do I endorse the proposal of Mr. Bonar Law because I have travelled in the Dominions, I have visited Canada like your late Member Sir Alfred

Smithers, I have visited Australia, and a former Member is now the Governor of that great Commonwealth.

I have been concerned with a Bank which has lent the Australian Government large sums of money to pay the farmers for the wheat which we have had to buy from Australia, and I am firmly convinced that anything which may draw the Dominions closer to the Mother Country is a policy which should be most heartily supported, and I look forward to the development of trade within the Empire.

One word more and I shall have done, it is with reference to Ireland. I will be quite frank. I feel as a practical man that we have no alternative, now that we see efforts are being made by the Provisional Governments in Ireland, but to ratify the proposed Treaty, but at the same time, let me say that I stand by every obligation which has been given by our Party and by our Country to Ulster, and I think that compensation should be given to the loyal Southern Unionists whose property has been destroyed and who have suffered in their persons and in their estates owing to the disturbed state of that country, and I am not going to say that some of us would not like to reopen the settlement of the Irish question if it were practicable to do so. The handling of the Irish question has during the last fifteen years been a series of tragic blunders.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have put before you what I stand for and what I do not stand

for. I have put before you the sane, sober Policy which His Majesty's present Government intend to carry out in this Country, and in my judgment any other Policy would have far-reaching effects amounting almost to those of a disastrous character, and really the only other definite Policy is that of the Labour Party about which I shall have more to say in subsequent speeches. I have not promised you a number of things which I see very little prospect of being carried out; I have not mentioned 9d. for 4d., nor spoken of rare and refreshing fruit, or even of a land fit for heroes to live in; those light and easy references, no doubt, served their turn, but the Country is tired of phrases and promises like those. The new Government has plenty of ability to do the work required even if it is lacking in the powers of self advertisement. It does not talk about first class brains, and it prefers a reputation for character which in the long run is, with average ability and good common sense, what the Country really likes. I only hope it may obtain an independent majority.

I believe the present Government will fulfil its duties on plain, honest and conscientious lines, such as will commend it to the Electors of this Country, and if at the end of this brief contest, which I can well see is going to be a strenuous one, I am by your votes placed at the head of the Poll, it will be my constant endeavour in the House of Commons to support in every way the Policy which has been put before the Country by the Prime Minister.

Appendix No. 3.

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE WORKING MEN'S CLUB, SWANLEY JUNCTION, NOVEMBER 13TH, 1922.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I am glad to find myself in Swanley Junction this evening because I know that this is a part of the Division which is not altogether well-disposed towards the Policy which I have been advocating, and I want to say to this audience a little more in detail what I have said to other audiences with regard to the working classes in this Country.

I have no quarrel with the working classes of this Country. Far from it. Why should I have? I have no quarrel with Trade Unions. I think they have done a great deal of good to the people who have joined them. I think they have been of great service to those who have not joined them. Indeed, I think they have been an advantage to the Country, and moreover, it was a Tory Government which made them legal. Where I quarrel with Trade Unions is when they step outside their true functions, when they engage in improper political activity, when they foment strikes which do harm, not only to the Country, but to the workers themselves. In these few sentences I hope I make my position with regard to labour, or, as I prefer

to call them, the working classes of the Country, quite clear.

What I object to, and those of you who have read my Election Address will see what my views are, is the programme of the Official Labour Party, which arrogates to itself the right to speak for the working classes of the Country, a right which it does not possess. How many people do you think compose the working classes of this Country out of the great population of forty-five millions? How many compose the working classes out of the Parliamentary Electors who at the present time number twenty millions? At least fifteen millions. Where are you to draw the line between the working classes and the rest of the community? I am sure I don't know. From the popular standpoint, I suppose very few of this audience would regard me as belonging to the working classes: but I claim to be one of them: it is true that I work more with my brain than with my hands, but I know what it is to live on £3 a week. Are you going to exclude from the working classes all those who work with their brains and limit your Policy to those who work only with their hands? For whom then do the Official Labour Party claim to speak? At its highest I should say that there are three million people for whom it has some sort of right to speak. I say to you, however, that if I thought the Policy of the Official Labour Party would restore prosperity to this Country, would improve the position of all its inhabitants and in particular the working

classes of whomsoever composed, I would support it.

It can be demonstrated, however, I profoundly believe, that the Policy which is being put forward by the Official Labour Party would be disastrous to the Country, and in particular would leave the working classes far less well off than they are at present to-day.

I think it is likely that Labour will be the strongest Party in the State after this Election next to the Conservative Party, and what is its Policy? It proposes amongst other things a Capital Levy, and I will explain to you what a Capital Levy means, and that involves a preliminary enquiry as to what you mean by Capital. I hope you will bear with me for a few minutes. Many people think Capital means money in the Bank, and money invested, say in War Stock. Why not, they say, take away by a Capital Levy, one-fifth of everybody's money, and one-fifth of everybody's War Stock? Well it could be done and without a great deal of difficulty, but Capital is much more than money and War Stock. It may be a house into which a working man has put his savings. Is his house to be sold so as to get hold of a one-fifth part of its value and of one-fifth of his Capital? It may be a business—how is the money to be provided? It may be a great manufacturing concern employing thousands of hands with plant and machinery. How are you going to effect your Levy? A Capital Levy on War Wealth I can understand, and if that had been

possible immediately after the War, I think I should have favoured it, but it turned out to be impracticable. If everybody has to sell their houses to pay the Capital Levy, who is going to buy them? Are the owners of businesses who want Capital to develop them to go to the Banks and borrow money to pay the Capital Levy? If so, just consider for a moment what a dislocation of trade and finance this means. Just look at the want of confidence and the shock to commercial enterprise which would be created. Let us look at other countries. Take Italy, which by a decree dated 22nd April, 1920, imposed an Italian Capital Levy on all Capital owned by residents in Italy or represented by assets situated in that Country; the Levy was small, but it entirely failed to realise the expected amount. What would be the result of a proposal to confiscate—for that is what it is—twenty per cent. of the National Wealth of this Country? Let us turn to Switzerland, which on 3rd December next, is to have the question of a Capital Levy submitted to a referendum of the inhabitants of that prosperous Country. The mere proposal, as we who see the news from day to day in the City of London know, has been disastrous. The proposal was to make a graduated Levy beginning at eight per cent. The result of this becoming known was a serious financial disturbance in the Country. Confidence was shaken, two banks failed, Swiss Securities fell fifty millions in a few days. Everybody was selling their Securities and

endeavouring to get the proceeds out of Switzerland, and the working watchmakers of Geneva—a City I know well—held a meeting of protest, and passed resolutions against the proposal. Well, if the mere proposal produced that result, what will the actual working of the Levy produce? We shall soon know, but I shall be surprised if the Swiss people, once they understand the matter, do not reject the revolutionary proposal by an overwhelming majority.

No, Ladies and Gentlemen, a Capital Levy will not help us, and above all, it will not help the wage earners of this Country. We want to develop our trade, industry and commerce, not restrict it. We want confidence by which alone trade, industry and commerce can be developed, and believe me, the only solution of unemployment is to be found in the return of prosperity to trade, industry and commerce.

Then the Official Labour Party has another item in its programme: It proposes the Nationalization of mines, railways and other things. Do you realise what Nationalization means? At its worst you have it in Russia to-day, and you do not need me to tell you what is the position of that great Country. At its best you had it during the War, when before you could buy anything and go anywhere, you had to get the leave of some Government Department. There was an army of Officials, necessary no doubt in time of War, which regulated the lives of the free people of this Country, and then when Government Depart-

ments attempt to carry on business their attempts always end in a serious loss. I could give you five specific instances of business carried on by Government Departments, which is what would happen if industries were Nationalized, which have quite recently resulted in a loss of seven million pounds.

I am against Nationalization of any kind. I am for individual effort and enterprise, and I am for that freedom of conduct which has enabled, in the past, the citizens of our Country to make for themselves the great position which in the world of industry and commerce they enjoy. I think the functions of Government should be limited, as much as possible, to the maintenance of law and order, to the defence of our Empire, to the provision of the due administration of Justice and to the Education of our future Citizens—if I could I would go very little beyond these cardinal items.

Then again, what are we to think of a Party, one of whose Official Candidates, Mr. Hartshorn, of Glamorganshire, writes, "The aims of the Parliamentary Labour Party are revolutionary in character." Then there is Mr. Morel, Candidate for Dundee, who says, "I have an intense hatred for Capitalism and have therefore no respect nor loyalty for the Monarchy and the Constitution which serve as its tools." What is the record of the Labour Party in certain London Boroughs—Rates increased or doubled, and at Poplar a policy indulged in which the Lord Chief Justice of England described as pure

anarchism. And then the Labour Party, in the words of Mr. P. Snowden, is a Socialist Party, and that is what I propose to call it.

No, the programme of the Official Labour Party is only going to bring us to disaster, and I am dead against it.

What does the Conservative Party offer to the Country as a sane, sober, solid Policy? Ladies and Gentlemen, you will find it outlined in my Election Address. I will develop it, and you shall ask me such questions as you wish and I will endeavour to answer them.

[The rest of this Speech dealt with the general political situation and need not be reprinted.]

Appendix No. 4.

SPEECH MADE AT THE KING'S HALL, SIDCUP, ON THE EVE OF THE POLL.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was at Sidcup three weeks ago to-night that, after an invitation received by me but a few hours earlier, I became the adopted Candidate for this great Parliamentary Division. I shall never forget the enthusiasm of the occasion nor the language in which I heard merits I never dreamed of possessing, and do not possess, described by my friends and supporters, who used words which I can only describe as the language of extreme exaggeration.

It was at Sidcup two days later that I made my first speech, and it is therefore only right that it should be in Sidcup, and in the largest Hall in Sidcup, that I should make the last speech which I am to deliver before the Electors record their votes to-morrow. I am not going to make much of a political speech to-night. I have made so many lately.

This is a proud moment in my life, to be standing on this platform, before this great audience, supported by all the leaders of the Party who are so well known to you, surrounded by my family and my friends, and with the encouragement ringing in my ears of the letters from Lord Darnley, Lord Sydenham, Lord Stanhope, all dwellers in Kent to which the

Chairman has referred and from others all of whom would have taken the trouble to come and be present to-night, if they could possibly have done so, to testify publicly to what they have been so generous as to write about me.

It is a proud moment I say, but it makes a man humble when so much is expected of him which he knows it is beyond his power to fulfil.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall take you with me, if you are so good as to listen, through some of the events of the strenuous days since I was adopted.

As I take my mind back, I ask myself what promises did I make when I was adopted; what promises have I since made, and have I fulfilled them? The promise which I made when adopted was a short and comprehensive one. It was contained in the words which I see were reported in the Press—"I will do my best."

Ladies and Gentlemen, I claim to-night that within the limits of my ability and strength, I have performed that undertaking. Let me remind you that this is only the eighteenth working day since the date of my adoption and in that time I have delivered forty-three separate speeches in different parts of this great Division. I have dealt with 300 letters, I have answered 214 questions, some of them conceived with the diabolical skill with which persons who ask questions at political meetings seem to be especially endowed, and I have travelled 1,150 miles in my own car throughout the Division.

My wife has sat on forty-one of the platforms with me; she was here when I first spoke in Sidcup. She is here to-night at this last meeting still supporting me as she has done now for over twenty-seven years.

I have endeavoured to cover at my various meetings the whole field of politics, and I claim to have given my views on every subject with all the clearness of language which I possess. Let me say this before I utter another sentence, that I have been received at nearly all the meetings with enthusiasm greater than I expected, that everywhere I have found ready and willing helpers, both men and women, and even at meetings, and there have been several, which have been hostile in their character, I have always been accorded, even by my bitterest opponents, a fair hearing, and I have found that throughout all this large part of Kent an appeal to the sporting instincts of Kentish men and women, at least to listen to both sides, has never failed to bring forth the best instincts of my audiences.

I should be making an omission, if I did not, much as I disagree with him, say here to-night publicly to this great audience, that I consider my opponent has fought this contest, aided by his eight years of Parliamentary experience, in a perfectly fair manner.

To-night, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am entering the last lap. To-morrow for twelve hours, starting at seven in the morning, I shall drive

round the Constituency and visit every Polling Station, and I do not doubt that those who believe in the cause, of which, in this Division, I am the spokesman, will do their duty to-morrow by recording their votes in my favour.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if I am placed at the head of the Poll to-morrow, as I believe I shall be, it will be due in the main to the conviction that the Country is tired of a Coalition Government. That in the interests of the Country the people feel they prefer to return to Party Government. They prefer to have His Majesty's Government endeavouring to carry out a Policy in which they whole-heartedly believe, and on the other side of the House they wish to see a virile Opposition, ready to check, to criticize, and to improve any proposals that are under consideration, and no doubt, if possible, to defeat them.

The Country is tired of clever phrases which captivate the ear, but do not solve the problem to which they are applied; they are tired of a policy of improvisation; they want to see in power a Government who will review the whole political and financial position, with the calmness of men entrusted with a great task, who will bring to the solution of that task business experience and sound judgment, and who will not easily promise things which they know are difficult, if not impossible, of performance. A Government which will allow individual effort and enterprise to reassert itself, and which will take its part, with the full weight of the Empire

behind it, in the Councils of Europe and of the world, is what the Country now wants.

His Majesty's present Government, with Mr. Bonar Law as Prime Minister, is the best so far as I can see, that can be formed to fulfil these requirements. Do not think that everything can be done at once. The position is a difficult one, and in my judgment has been badly mishandled during the past four years. There is no immediate remedy to be applied which can by a stroke of the pen, or the waving of a magic wand, put things straight. Economy and hard work are what are required. The realisation of the altered value of things, and of the state of chaos in which both financially and industrially the World now finds itself, is vital.

Let me again remind you that in my view this is a very important election for the Country. There has been no real election since 1910, and then the issues before the Country were nothing like so serious as those upon which the electorate is called upon to decide at the present time.

It is true there was an election in 1918, but then everybody was for supporting the Coalition Government of Mr. Lloyd George in order to enable him, with the full force of public opinion, to define the terms of Peace. Everybody, under the impulse of the optimistic language of Mr. Lloyd George, was for making Germany pay the whole cost of the wicked war which she herself had provoked. Everybody was for searching the pockets of the Germans. Everybody, most of all Mr. Lloyd George, was for hanging the Kaiser, and no one was for marrying him a Sunday or two ago.

How many of those optimistic hopes have been realised? Where is the land that was to be fit for heroes to live in? Where is the new World which we were promised?

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have seriously to take stock of the position, and you well know my views and policy.

Now let me say a final word of thanks to those who have worked for me, to the women, no less than to the men. Let me tell you my experience of a lady elector on the night of my adoption, who came up to me and said to me, "Mr. Nesbitt, may I speak to you?" I said, "Yes, certainly, Madam." She answered, "My husband is going to vote for you." That was good news then. I was young at the business, I had not become used to large posters with my name in big letters pasted on other people's houses, to my photograph in the newspapers, to all the episodes of my career, some of which I cherished in the privacy of recollection, being dragged from me and I said to myself, at all events I shall have *one* vote in my favour! The lady continued that for her part she should not vote for me, although she said, rather bashfully, that she had heard me speak, that I had a kind face and that she believed me to be honest, but unless I could satisfy her that my policy was best for the Country, she should not vote for me.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is the type of Elector that I was glad to meet, and it has been with that sentence always before me, that I have made the many speeches to which I have referred. My object has been to satisfy the Electors, and my object is to satisfy you who are here to-night.

There are 12,000 women electors in this Division. I should have liked to have made myself known to all of them, but that has not been possible in the time.

It is important that all who have votes should exercise them. Many have never voted before. I heard it said the other night by a distinguished lady speaker to a large meeting of women, " Do not write on the ballot paper anything nice about Mr. Nesbitt, although it is plain you like him. Just put upon the ballot paper one of those crosses, which when you were little girls, you used to put at the end of letters when you wrote to people that you liked, but be sure to put only one. You may give Mr. Nesbitt the rest afterwards." Ladies and Gentlemen, it is " the afterwards " which I am now looking forward to. Mrs. Nesbitt will be displeased at what I am going to say, but she cannot stop me now. It is she who has brought me fit to the post. I am indeed more active in mind and body than when I entered upon this strenuous contest. It is she who has hidden the Blue Books of Government Reports and other literature from me, when it was time I should go to bed, and much as we both like Sidcup and other parts of the

Division, it is she who has enforced the salutary rule, that during some part of the night at least, I should forget there is such a place as the Chislehurst Division of the County of Kent.

It has been a wonderful experience that of suddenly passing from the condition of being a private peaceful citizen to that of being a public man. I have seen people in the streets pointing at me. I have noticed the same thing on the platforms of railway stations, and in railway carriages where I knew people by sight, but not to speak to. I have heard it whispered, " Who is Mr. Nesbitt? " Ladies and Gentlemen, you will give the answer to-morrow when you tell the World that Mr. Nesbitt is the Member of Parliament for the Chislehurst Division of the County of Kent.

I thank you all very much for having listened to me so patiently, and if I have the honour of representing you in the House of Commons, I shall not spare myself in your service.

LETTERS RECEIVED ON THE EVE OF THE POLL AND REFERRED TO BY THE CHAIRMAN AT THE MEETING.

Letter from the Earl of Darnley.

(Formerly the Honourable Ivo Bligh.)

Cobham Hall,
Cobham, Kent.
November 9th, 1922.

My dear Nesbitt,

I very much regret that I am unable to come to support you at your meeting at Sidcup, on the 14th, but I have another engagement that I cannot alter.

It would have been a great pleasure to tell those assembled at your meeting of the numberless opportunities that I have had in the past twenty-two years of recognising your great ability and sagacious judgment in many phases of life.

As a brother Kentish man, the message I should like to send to them, would be that a Constituency that was fortunate enough to secure your services, would find themselves represented by a member with very exceptional qualifications for representing a great County Constituency in Parliament.

I send you the heartiest good wishes for a thumping majority next Wednesday.

Yours very sincerely,

Darnley.

Letter from Lord Sydenham.

(Formerly Secretary to the Cabinet Committee of Imperial Defence. Governor of Victoria, Australia, 1901-1904. Governor of Bombay, 1907-1913. Member of Committee on National Insurance of War Risks 1916.)

101 Onslow Square, S.W.
13*th November,* 1922.

My dear Nesbitt,

Only the burden of age prevents me from coming to support you to-morrow. This Election is the most critical that has taken place in my life-time. The late Coalition Government, brought into existence by intrigue, has, by its extravagance at home and its policy of mad adventure abroad, led the Nation to the brink of disaster. Four years ago the War was won by the devoted gallantry of the Imperial Forces, not by the late Prime Minister, and they have placed us in a position never attained before in all our history.

We were trusted everywhere, and the World looked to us for guidance through the many and great difficulties left by the War. Where are we now? The settlement, so-called, of Europe was such as to lay the seeds of certain future Wars. Our Allies, whose whole-hearted co-operation was essential unless we were to lose the peace, had come to regard us with doubt and suspicion. Constitutional Government was suspended in favour of an autocracy which, with

the assistance of a large private secretariat, took over the duties of the Great Departments of State, and issued a warlike manifesto to the Dominions without consultation with the Cabinet. These and other reactionary proceedings, opposed to the first principles of democracy, must be ended if national stability is to be restored.

The Labour Party, which has no claim to and does not represent working men, and is mainly inspired by alien influences, has laid its cards on the table for all to see. Every item of its proclaimed policy has been practically applied in Russia, with the result that the richest Country in the World has been ruined, that the working classes have been reduced to slavery under a military despotism, and that at least twenty million people have been either murdered or killed by starvation and disease. Great efforts have been made to conceal the truth from our working men and women; but enough must be known to make many of them recoil from the policy invented by Karl Marx, which would quickly make unemployment general in this Country, leading to unbearable suffering and wide-spread starvation.

If we are to recover prosperity, we must have a period of honest and stable government, the restoration of constitutional procedure, the mitigation of the intolerable burdens which are creating unemployment, peace abroad and unity at home, and the utilization of the vast resources

of the Empire as the surest means of economic salvation.

For all this and more, you are making a firm stand. You have all the qualifications, and I hope that a great career of usefulness lies before you, and I warmly wish you success.

Yours sincerely,

SYDENHAM.

LETTER FROM EARL STANHOPE, D.S.O., M.C.
(Parliamentary Secretary to the War Office 1918.)

Chevening,
Sevenoaks.
November 11th, 1922.

My dear Mr. Nesbitt,

I'm so very sorry. I don't possess a car, and trains back seem impossible.

May I say that I think Chislehurst is very much to be congratulated on having prevailed on you to stand. I know from having worked with you what a splendid member you will make.

May you have a splendid meeting on Tuesday, and be returned head of the poll by a thumping majority next Wednesday. With renewed regrets at being unable to attend the Meeting.

Yours sincerely,

STANHOPE.

LETTER FROM
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD CLAUD HAMILTON.

(Late Chairman of the Great Eastern Railway. First elected M.P. 1865. Late Chairman of the London Conservative Members of Parliament.)

28 Cambridge Square, W.
November 8th, 1922.

My dear Nesbitt,

I am so glad you are standing for you are just the sort of man we require in the House of Commons under existing circumstances—cool, courageous and competent—and capable of taking a broad view of life.

I think everything is going well for us. Lord Curzon's speech excellent.

Sincerely yours,
CLAUD J. HAMILTON.

LETTER FROM THE EARL OF NORTHBROOK.

36 Great Cumberland Place, W.

Dear Mr. Nesbitt,

I am very glad that you are going into the House of Commons, for I take it there is little doubt as to the result of the Election in the Chislehurst Division. Men like yourself possessing ability, business knowledge and experience, are greatly wanted in the House always, but particularly at the present time.

It is good of you to consent to stand.

Wishing you success.

Yours very truly,
NORTHBROOK.

LETTER FROM MR. WALTER H. FOSTER.

(Solicitor to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of England and Wales, and one of Mr. Nesbitt's colleagues on the Special Training Grants Committee of the Ministry of Labour.)

34 De Vere Gardens, W.8.

My dear Nesbitt,

I was disconsolate at being unable to attend Arthur Walters' inaugural dinner on Wednesday, but I was unfortunately ill in bed.

I am writing you principally to wish you every success in your candidature. To my mind you are just the sort of man we want in the House. Heaps of experience and the pluck of your own convictions, but behind all that, if you will let me say so, real sound ideals, or in other words, you are a real human being, what some people I believe call a real white man. I have learned a lot from you anyhow, so I wish you the best I can, and I shall watch your career with the greatest interest.

Yours ever,
WALTER H. FOSTER.

Other Speeches were delivered during the contest dealing with Unemployment, the Agricultural Position, our Foreign Relations, the true function of a Coalition Government and the Party System. The following is a list of the places in this Division where Speeches were made :—

Date.	Place.
Oct. 25th	Sidcup.
,, 27th	Sidcup.
,, 28th	Foots Cray.
,, 30th	Downe.
,, 30th	Knockholt.
,, 31st	Swanley Junction.
,, 31st	Chislehurst.
Nov. 1st	Orpington.
,, 1st	Chelsfield.
,, 1st	Green-Street-Green.
,, 2nd	Ash-next-Ridley.
,, 2nd	Kingsdown.
,, 2nd	Eynsford and Farningham.
,, 3rd	Hayes.
,, 3rd	West Wickham.
,, 4th	Southfleet.
,, 4th	Longfield.
,, 4th	North Cray.
,, 6th	Chislehurst (Women's Citizen Union).
,, 6th	Horton Kirby.
,, 6th	Sutton-at-Hone.
,, 6th	Darenth.
,, 7th	Chislehurst.
,, 7th	Sidcup (Recreation Club).
,, 7th	Sidcup (King's Hall).
,, 8th	Swanley Junction (Fruit Growers Association).
,, 8th	Fawkham.
,, 9th	Wilmington.
,, 9th	St. Paul's Cray.
,, 9th	St. Mary Cray.

Date.	Place.
Nov. 9th	Mottingham.
,, 10th	Keston.
,, 10th	Orpington.
,, 10th	Farnborough.
,, 11th	Crockenhill.
,, 11th	Farningham.
,, 11th	Chislehurst.
,, 13th	Orpington.
,, 13th	Cudham.
,, 13th	Swanley Junction.
,, 14th	Swanley Junction (to Women Electors).
,, 14th	Sidcup (St. John's Hall).
,, 14th	Sidcup (King's Hall).

APPENDIX No. 5.

[Reprinted from *The Sidcup Times* of Nov. 17th, 1922.]

THE ELECTION.

CHISLEHURST.

MR. NESBITT ELECTED.

NEARLY A TWO TO ONE VOTE.

NESBITT, R. C. (Con.)	11,801
MASON, D. M. (Lib.)	6,256
Majority ..	5,545

(No change.)

After eighteen days of strenuous campaigning, Mr. Robert Chancellor Nesbitt, the Conservative Candidate was on Wednesday returned at the head of the poll for the Chislehurst Division by a majority of 5,545 votes.

The present election brought two new candidates into the field, Mr. Nesbitt taking the place of Sir Alfred Smithers, who, on account of failing health, did not seek re-election. Mr. Mason had represented Coventry until the last election, and for some months had been before the electorate as the prospective Liberal Candidate.

SEVENTY-ONE PER CENT. POLL.

Of the 28,436 electors in the Division, 18,166, or just a fraction under 71 per cent., voted. Of these 109 spoilt their votes.

The counting was carried out at the Sidcup Council Offices yesterday (Thursday) by Mr. T. G. Baynes, Returning Officer, and the result was declared at 2.40 p.m. to a large crowd who had waited for some time in the roadway.

Checking was begun by the counting agents at 10.30, and the actual counting at 12.50, and this task was completed at 2.30.

THE DECLARATION.

The declaration of the poll was first made in the Council Chamber by the Returning Officer, amongst those present being the two candidates, Mrs. Nesbitt, Mrs. Mason, Miss Nesbitt, Mr. H. Attwood (Conservative Agent), Mr. Frank Humby (Liberal Agent), Mr. Charles T. Knight and Mr. J. Steele.

Following the giving of the figures, Mr. Nesbitt proposed a vote of thanks to the Returning Officer for the able way in which he had conducted the counting of the votes. He also associated with Mr. Baynes all his helpers, who were largely drawn from the staffs of the Sidcup Council, the Chislehurst Council, the Bexley Council, the Sutton-at-Hone Council, and St. Mary Cray Council. Mr. Nesbitt also thanked the presiding officers at the polling stations, whose task, he said, had been onerous and responsible.

With regard to Mr. Mason, who took different views from those he (the speaker) held, he had found in him a worthy opponent. (Applause.) Mr. Mason had fought that election in a way which had inspired admiration. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Mason, seconding the vote of thanks, said the fight had been a keen one and fought on a high level. He tendered to Mr. Nesbitt his hearty congratulations on his victory.

Both candidate and Member shook hands. Mr. Baynes replied on behalf of his assistants and himself, saying that their task had been a difficult one owing to the weather conditions.

"MY CONSTITUENTS."

The figures were then displayed at the Council window to those waiting below, and the result accepted with enthusiasm.

Mr. Nesbitt was received with loud cheering. He first thanked all those who had given him support during the eighteen days he had been before the constituency. He had said he would do his best, and that had been done, but not without their help and that of Mr. Attwood, his Agent. The result in the Chislehurst Division, he thought, would be an encouragement to Mr. Bonar Law, and show that in that constituency they knew what the country needed. (Cheers.)

Mr. Nesbitt added that he had had against him an opponent who was a gentleman, a patriotic Englishman, who meant what he said and meant well for his country, but along different lines from those of himself, and one who had won their great regard. (Applause.) His final words were: "I will do my best for my Constituents, not only for those who supported me, but for people of all political creeds in my constituency." (Applause.)

Mrs. Nesbitt, who stood with her husband at the window, said, "I thank you all," and was heartily cheered.

MR. MASON CALLED.

There was a call for Mr. Mason, who appeared at the window and said he was glad of the opportunity of saying the last word. (Laughter.) He assured them of his thanks for all the courtesy and kindness he had experienced in the Division. He also thanked Mr. Nesbitt for his kindly references, and said that they had tried to keep the contest on a high level, which would redound to the good name of the county of Kent. (Applause.)

DRAWN THROUGH THE STREETS.

The note of triumph was continued when Mr. Nesbitt left the Council Offices, and proceeded with his wife to his car. To this a rope was attached, and the new M.P. for the Chislehurst Division was drawn by several supporters to his committee rooms at 45 High Street. Reaching the Post Office, the men proceeded "at the double." Outside the committee rooms, Mr. Nesbitt said he had spoken at forty-three meetings, and the car they had pulled had covered 1,150 miles during the course of the campaign.

CLOSING OF THE CAMPAIGN.
THE FINAL MEETINGS.

Sidcup has been the chosen centre of the Chislehurst Division for this election, both candidates having their central committee rooms

in High Street, from which the campaign has been directed.

Moreover, for the first time the counting of the votes took place in Sidcup, the ballot boxes being brought to the Sidcup Council Offices after the closing hour on Wednesday night, and the counting proceeded with at 10.30 yesterday morning.

Both candidates addressed final meetings in Sidcup. The largest audience was that which assembled in Mr. Nesbitt's support at King's Hall, which for a second time in this whirlwind campaign was filled with an audience enthusiastic in its support of the Conservative candidate.

Sir Henry Lennard (President of the Chislehurst Division Conservative Association) came over from West Wickham—the extremity of the Division—to preside, and had many leaders of the party supporting him on the platform.

Letters were received from the following who were to be present: Earl Darnley, Earl Stanhope, Lord Claud Hamilton, Lord Northbrook, Lord Sydenham, Sir Alfred Smithers (the late Member), Sir Frank Warner, K.B.E. (Mottingham), and Captain R. A. Vansittart. Lord Darnley wrote in high terms of Mr. Nesbitt's personal qualifications, and of his splendid services in other directions.

Mr. Travers Hawes and Sir John Dewrance. of Chislehurst, were, owing to fog, also unable to be present.

Mr. Nesbitt, who met with a great reception,

did not touch at length in his final speech on political questions, but gave an account of his three weeks' campaigning, which, he said, assured him of victory on the morrow.

He mentioned that he had addressed forty-three meetings in the three weeks, travelled 1,150 miles, received and dealt with 300 letters, and answered 214 questions.

He had been greatly impressed by the moderation of the demands put before him, and everywhere he had been given a fair hearing. He paid a tribute to the "spade work" done by his supporters in all parts of the Division, and amid applause he thanked his wife for the help and encouragement she had been.

The supporting speakers were Sir Francis Towle, C.B.E., and Mrs. Hudson Lyall, L.C.C.

Sir Francis Towle said he regarded Mr. Nesbitt as a man who had the gift of prevision—one who could look ahead and see changes likely to come about and provide for them. This was the man to send to uplift the hands of Mr. Bonar Law.

Mrs. Hudson Lyall, who had travelled up from Somerset in order to be present, delivered an address that was brilliant, witty and informing. It was the speech of the evening.

Lord Waring proposed, and Mr. P. Newton seconded, the vote pledging support of the candidate; Mr. W. Ironmonger proposed, and Mr. F. Bunting seconded, the vote of thanks to the speakers; and a meeting that was enthusiastic all through closed with cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Nesbitt, and the National Anthem.

Mr. Nesbitt had an enthusiastic audience at Orpington on Friday, when his brother, Mr. Alan Chancellor Nesbitt, of Orpington, was in the Chair, and Sir Francis Towle was the supporting speaker.

Mr. Alan Chancellor Nesbitt said they had every regard for the genuine working-people of this country, and they could not help rejoicing in the fact that the policy of confiscation, spoliation and nationalization had been "turned down" in the recent municipal elections.

There are 28,000 electors in the Chislehurst Division, of whom 12,000 are women.

THE NEW MEMBER.

Mr. Robert Chancellor Nesbitt was born at Liverpool in 1868. He is the eldest son of the late Robert Henry Nesbitt, M.A. (Oxon), who was not only a distinguished scholar 60 years ago at Oxford, but a man of great attainments in other walks of life. He died in 1881. The new Member is the senior partner in the well-known firm of Markby, Stewart and Wadesons, which was founded in 1780. He has been a member of the Council of the Law Society since 1909.

Mr. Nesbitt is Chairman of the National Mutual Life Association of Australasia, and is a director of the Union Bank of Australia. He served on many Government committees during the War, and has been Chairman of the Special Training Grants Committee of the Ministry of

Labour, which spent £3,000,000 on maintenance and training grants to 20,000 ex-officers and men of like educational standing. At the beginning of this year Mr. Nesbitt was the Chairman of a committee appointed by the Minister of Labour to consider the question of the employment of certain officers lately employed in Ireland on the military legal staff of the Judge Advocate General's Department. He was also a member of the small special committee appointed by the Lord Chancellor in 1920 to fix the fees payable in the Supreme Court, and the Geddes Committee, in their report commenting on the cost of the administration of justice, notes that the work of this committee, of which Sir Malcolm Macnaghten, K.C., M.P., was chairman, had effected a saving to the public of £70,000 a year.

Mr. Nesbitt is a member of the Committee on the Re-arrangement of the Circuit System appointed by the late Lord Chancellor, which is still sitting.

He has since 1912 been Vice-Chairman of the Rochester Diocesan Board of Finance. In 1917 he wrote a book on "Church Finance in London," as a result of which the London Diocesan Fund was established, which, amalgamating the separate societies then making their own appeals, now controls the whole finance of the Diocese of London.

Mr. Nesbitt has travelled through Canada and Australia, and our possessions in the Far East, and received the thanks of the Commonwealth Government for services voluntarily rendered

in connection with some legislation affecting Australia in the British Parliament.

He married, in 1895, Lilian Mary, the fourth daughter of Mr. Edward Ellis, of Shadingfield Hall, Suffolk, and has one son and two daughters. He lives at Hildenborough, Kent, and is a member of the Athenæum, the Union and the City of London Clubs.

APPENDIX No. 6.

LETTERS RELATING TO SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT WORK DONE BY MR. NESBITT.

(Printed during the Election to meet criticism.)

MINISTRY OF LABOUR SPECIAL TRAINING GRANTS COMMITTEE.

Ministry of Labour,
Montagu House,
Whitehall, S.W.1.
5th July 1921.

Dear Nesbitt,

I learn with pleasure from Captain McClellan, Controller of Appointments and Civil Liabilities Department, that you have expressed your willingness to take over duties of Chairman of the Grants Committee, and I accordingly extend to you a cordial invitation to accept the post.

In doing so I am reminded of the valuable services you have already rendered as a member of the Grants Committee, and my appreciation is the greater for the considerable sacrifice of time and leisure that these services have demanded.

The success which has attended the Training Grants Scheme is largely due to the loyal and enthusiastic assistance voluntarily given by professional and business men throughout the country, and I am glad to think that in the work that remains to be done, the Committees,

Interviewing Boards and the Department will have the benefit of your experienced advice and guidance.

Very faithfully yours,

R. C. Nesbitt, Esq. T. J. Macnamara.

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7 Devonshire Square,
Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.
6th July 1921.

My Dear Minister,

I have to acknowledge your letter of yesterday's date in which you invite me to take over the duties of Chairman of the Grants Committee.

I explained how I was situate to Capt. McClellan, but nevertheless I am glad to have the opportunity of taking some further part in the working out of the Training Grants Scheme with which I have been connected, in one capacity or another, since its inception, and I willingly accept the office; in particular I thank you for the graceful language in which your invitation is couched.

I must say I think the figures which I have seen shewing the result of the recent professional examinations, so far as men who were receiving training grants are concerned, are really quite remarkable confirming as they do the correctness of the type of men selected for grants and the good use which they have made of the funds which the Government has provided.

I hope that I may secure the help and confidence of the Committee, Interviewing Boards

and your Department in the discharge of my work in the important post you have entrusted to me.

Very faithfully yours,

Robt. C. Nesbitt.

The Rt. Hon. T. J. Macnamara,
Ministry of Labour,
Montagu House,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

Note.—This Committee spent £3,000,000 in Training Grants to 20,000 ex-officers whose careers in the professions and higher callings had been seriously interfered with through serving in the war.

Lord Chancellor's Committee on Supreme Court Fees.

(Letter from Sir Claud Schuster, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor.)

House of Lords,
S.W.1.
23rd June 1920.

Dear Sir,

The Lord Chancellor asks me to say that he learns from Mr. Sharpe that you will be good enough to serve upon a Committee which his Lordship intends to appoint for considering the Supreme Court Fees Order 1884, with a view to increasing those fees which are too small, having regard to modern conditions.

The Lord Chancellor asks me to thank you for the service which you are good enough to render, and to say that he is to-day accordingly making an Order setting up the Committee.

I will send you a copy of the Order in due course. The Chairman will be Sir Malcolm Macnaghten, K.B.E., K.C., and the other members of the Committee will be Sir Thomas Willes Chitty and Mr. B. W. Gilbert of the Treasury.

Yours faithfully,

R. C. Nesbitt, Esq. CLAUD SCHUSTER.

House of Lords,
S.W.1.
20th December 1921.

Dear Nesbitt,

The Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls yesterday signed the Order giving effect to the proposals of the Fees Committee. The Treasury have accepted them in principle and the papers are now with the President of the Probate Division for his signature. I have, therefore, no doubt, that the instrument will be completed either to-day or to-morrow.

This gives the Lord Chancellor the opportunity, for which he has been waiting, of expressing to you his very sincere thanks for the long and difficult task which you have completed. It would have been impossible to accomplish it effectively without the assistance of one who, like yourself, brought to the deliberations of the Committee a ripe experience of the practical work of the profession, and who also carried the confidence of the Law Society and the profession generally.

Please accept in addition my own personal thanks for your invariable courtesy and kindness.

Yours sincerely,

R. C. Nesbitt, Esq. CLAUD SCHUSTER.

P.S.—Macnaghten again and again told me what a strength you were upon the Committee and how high an opinion he was led to form of your ripe judgment.

NOTE.—The Geddes Committee reported that this small Committee's work would save the Country £70,000 a year.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S COMMITTEE ON RE-ARRANGEMENT OF THE CIRCUIT SYSTEM.

House of Lords,
S.W.1.
11th April 1922.

Dear Nesbitt,

The Geddes Committee have reported that the present Circuit arrangements ought to be re-considered with a view to the introduction of economies, and particularly the elimination of unnecessary towns.

The Lord Chancellor proposes, with the concurrence of the Lord Chief Justice, to set up a Committee to consider the matter. Mr. Justice Rigby Swift will be Chairman of the Committee, and the Lord Chancellor asks me to inquire whether you will be so good as to assist him by serving upon it.

Yours sincerely,

CLAUD SCHUSTER.

Robert C. Nesbitt, Esq.

NOTE.—This Committee is still sitting.

The London Diocesan Fund.

To Robert Chancellor Nesbitt.

We, members of the Council of this Fund, beg to express to you our appreciation of the valuable services that you have rendered, not only to the Fund, but to the Diocese of London, in connection with the fusion of the London Board of Finance and the Bishop of London's Fund into one Body.

It was a task which demanded care and judgment of a high order; and the tact and ability which you have brought to its successful accomplishment command our admiration no less than our gratitude.

January, 1918.

Signatures.

A. F. London:

Alan F. Barker — Evelyn Hubbard

C. H. Darlington — E. E. Holmes (Archdeacon of London)

H. L. Sidney — Henry E. J. Bevan

W. W. Aikenhead — E. P. Shelley

John Kensington

Brook Deedes — G. A. King

J. A. Longley — F. N. Whitmore

G. R. Bullock-Webster — John F. Ellison.

Lilian Bound — E. Grose Hodge

F. Leith Boyd.

SIGNATORIES:

A. F. LONDON:
The Rt. Revd. The Lord Bishop of London.

JOHN E. BANKES:
The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Bankes, a Lord Justice of Appeal.

EVELYN HUBBARD:
The Hon. Evelyn Hubbard, Chairman the Guardian Assurance Company.

C. H. ISLINGTON:
The Bishop of Islington.

E. E. HOLMES:
The Archdeacon of London.

H. L. STEPNEY:
The Bishop of Stepney.

HENRY E. J. BEVAN:
The Archdeacon of Middlesex.

W. W. WILLESDEN:
The Bishop of Willesden.

E. P. THESIGER:
The Hon. Sir E. P. Thesiger, K.C.B.

JOHN KENSINGTON:
The Bishop of Kensington.

BROOK DEEDES:
The Archdeacon of Hampstead.

G. A. KING:
Taxing Master at the Royal Courts of Justice.

J. A. LONGLEY:
Member of the Council of the London Diocesan Fund.

F. N. THICKNESSE:
Prebendary Thicknesse, Rector of St. George's, Hanover Square.

G. R. BULLOCK-WEBSTER:
The Revd. Canon Bullock-Webster, Rector of St. Michael, Paternoster Royal.

JOHN H. ELLISON:
The Revd. John H. Ellison, M.V.O., Rector St. Michael's, Cornhill,

LULHAM POUND:
Sir Lulham Pound, Bt. Alderman City of London.

E. GROSE HODGE:
The Revd. Prebendary Edward Grose Hodge, Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral; Rector of Birmingham.

F. LEITH BOYD:
Prebendary Leith Boyd, Vicar of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Three Strenuous Weeks

and Other Episodes

Robert Chancellor Nesbitt